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Evangelical Advocacy: A Response to Global Poverty

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Biblical Basis For Our Advocacy

Martin Shupack, □reprinted from the Jan-Feb 1999 issue of the [Washington Memo](#)

Members of the MCC Washington Office staff view their advocacy work as ministry rooted in the life, teachings and lordship of Jesus Christ. Scripture affirms that all "thrones, powers, rulers and authorities" have been created by and for Christ ([Colossians 1:16](#)). Under Jesus' providential rule, government is "God's servant" to restrain evil and benefit those who do right ([Romans 13](#); [1 Pet. 2](#)). Governing authorities are to "rescue the weak and destitute" ([Psalms 82:4](#)) and "defend the rights of the poor and needy" ([Proverbs 31:9](#)). [*The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*](#) affirms that the "governing authorities of the world have been instituted by God . . . as servants . . . called to act justly and provide order."

Yet, government too often protects evildoers and harms the just. Thus, Jesus told his disciples not to be like the rulers who "lord it over" others and act as "tyrants" ([Mark 10:42](#)). [Revelation 13](#) is often cited as an example of government at its worst. [*The Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective*](#) points out that "nations tend to demand total allegiance. They then become idolatrous and rebellious against the will of God."

Because governing authorities frequently misuse their power, God uses people of faith to confront and call authorities to fulfill their intended purpose. For example, Esther risked her life to plead the case of her people before King Ahasuerus ([Esther 4-8](#)). The people appealed to Nehemiah, the governor, about unjust economic practices of the ruling class ([Nehemiah 5](#)). The apostle Paul spoke to

Felix about "justice, self-control and the coming judgment" ([Acts 24:24-25](#)).

We witness to the way of Christ by:

1. *Praying for and showing respect to governing authorities.* Our advocacy must express a spirit of concern for persons in authority and a biblical understanding of government's role.
2. *Being the church. Advocacy has integrity as it is rooted in the practice, teachings and mission of the church.* For example, advocacy on behalf of policies that empower people living in poverty is given moral force by the witness of Mennonites and Brethren in Christ who are living and serving in marginalized communities in the United States and around the world.
3. *Calling governing authorities to act justly for all people.* While God's kingdom will not be legislated into being, governing authorities can develop laws and policies that--as the Confession declares--"move toward justice, peace and compassion for all people."

By raising our voices on behalf of those who are struggling to overcome poverty, oppression and violence, advocacy responds faithfully to Jesus' command to "love our neighbors as ourselves."

FURTHER:

Ambassadors

1. **Worshipping God as his people** – our first responsibility is to be a people that gives God rightful honour
2. **Stewardship** – of the creation God has given us to look after
3. **Discipleship** – helping others to grow in maturity in their faith through teaching, exercising gifts, pastoral support
4. **Caring for each other** – and ministering to the needs of those in the church (eg

sharing

possessions, caring for the sick, visiting those living alone)

5. **Modeling an alternative society** - and a restored community. This does not mean that the church is to opt out of the world, but that in the world it is to model a different way of life and be a light to the world

6. **Proclaiming the good news** - of Jesus Christ so that people may turn to him and be saved

7. **Prayer for God to intervene** - and bring about his purposes. This is part of the priestly role of interceding for a world that hates and rejects the church

8. **Listening to God** - to hear what his plans are in any given situation

9. **Caring for the needy and suffering** - and being with them in time of need

10. **Prophetic role in speaking out** - against idolatry and injustice. In Nazareth Jesus identified his mission with the prophecy of Isaiah that describes a mission to the poor, the captive and the oppressed (Luke 4:16-30)

11. **Social action** - engaging with a society to carry on God's creative and redemptive acts,

being salt to the world. We are called to engage with everything in the world to make it more in line with God's will (2 Corinthians 5:19, Colossians 1:20)

12. **Seeking social justice** - governments and other institutions or individuals have been given roles by God to bring about his purposes, but too often they perpetuate injustice and suffering and dishonour his name. Therefore seeking justice often involves engaging with the powers of the day, eg government, business, media, international institutions

13. **Bringing peace and reconciliation** - to the world, which includes peace with God, with others and with the creation. Peace is at the heart of the calling of the church

14. **Confronting the unseen powers** - some men and women are held directly by demons that possess them, others are held by sickness and the dread of death that the evil powers exploit, others by the unjust structures that have evil powers behind them

15. **Performing signs and wonders** - to demonstrate God's power and bring healing